30/28-1760

Welcome Address

TO

His Excellency Shri Chakravarti Rajagopalachari,

THE FIRST INDIAN GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF INDIA

May it please Your Excellency,

On behalf of the citizens of Delhi, we feel most happy in welcoming you as our first Indian Governor-General to this old and historic capital of India. Whereas the appointment of an Indian to this high post would have been a matter of great pride and pleasure to us, we consider it to be the great good fortune of the country and ourselves that a statesman of your high calibre, determination and insight, your scholarly learning and fearless leadership should adorn this exalted office.

Honoured Sir,

The history of the world affords no parallel to the collosal and unprecedented problems our country has had to face immediately in the wake of her freedom. Even to-day she is confronted with many a danger and difficulty, internal as well as external. At a time like this your installation as Head of the State is indeed a boon and a blessing to your Cabinet, specially when the soothing and solacing hand of the Father of the Nation has been suddenly removed from over them. You have been a great friend of the Pujya Bapu Ji, his unwavering follower, close relation and at times also his fearless critic; so your mature experience, wise counsel and good wishes would be of immense help to your cabinet and enable them to tide over their many and varied difficulties.

Respected Sir,

Just as this ever glorious city of Delhi has been the mighty citadel of British Imperialism, it has also been the centre of an unceasing struggle for freedom. The people of this place, old and young—men, women and children—have always been in the fore-front in the various battles for freedom. The patriots whose heads were severed from their bodies and hung up on the trees in Chandni Chowk after the unsuccessful War of Independence of 1857, those that after the famous Bomb Case in 1913, were hanged in the Delhi Central Jail, closely guarded by armed British soldiers, the youth and the children who were indiscriminately machine-gunned in the course of the agitation against the Rowlett Act, those who in the Civil Disobedience Movements of 1929, 1930 and 1932 filled up the jails and put up smilingly with bullets and lathi charges and suffered other indescribable hardships, as also those who in the "Quit India Movement" of 1942 received bullets on their proud and swelling breasts and sacrificed their all at the alter of freedom—all these belonged to this very city and it is because of their great and memorable sacrifices that we can hold our heads high today.

But, Sir, now when the entire country is enjoying freedom and our own chosen representatives are in-charge of the Central and the Provincial Governments, it is nothing short of a misfortune that we in Delhi should still find ourselves under the old British type of bureaucratic regime. We, claim it, Your Excellency, as our just and inherent right that making all due allowance for the safety and security of Delhi as the capital of India, the Government of this province should be manned by elected representatives of the people, with a legislature of their own. When even backward states, with a population of only half that of Delhi now enjoy a representative system of Government, we leave it to your own goodself to decide how far it is just or fair to deprive us alone of our cherished and legitimate right.

Your Excellency,

This Municipal Committee of ours is one of the oldest in the country, being now about 86 years old, and it is singularly unfortunate that it has not so far received a just and equitable treatment at the hands of the Central Government. We have been denied grants even for the expenditure incurred under circumstances quite beyond our control. No wonder, the poor people of old Delhi feel painfully miserable when they find that water flows in abundance from 18 to 24 hours on one side of the road while they on the other thirst for it.

In New Delhi the density of population is 15 to 20 persons per acre, whereas in the city of Delhi more than 1000 persons are at places huddled together like animals. The New Delhi Municipal Committee was granted the licence for distribution of electric energy, which provides them with an yearly revenue of about rupees fifteen lacs while the repeated requests of our Committee for the grant of such a licence, all went unheeded. Then again the Central Government was pleased to give liberal grants for capital expenditure to the New Delhi Municipal Committee, but we were left to our own resources to meet such a heavy expenditure.

Respected Raja Ji,

With the advent of freedom such invidious distinctions should not be allowed to continue. We fully hope that in spite of the opposition of certain elements, Delhi will soon have a full-fledged Corporation, with full control over water and electric supply as

well as transport and other essential services, for it is only then that such glaring distinctions between the rich and the poor can be made to disappear.

In the first place the population of Delhi swelled suddenly during the course of the War, resulting in an enormously increased expenditure. After the War, although the Government decided to make a grant of five crores of rupees to Delhi for her Post War Schemes, but before this decision of the Government could take a practical shape, the Interim Government came into being and the matter was put into the cold storage, and then with the partition of the country, our expenditure increased beyond all proportions. It increased from a total of Rs. 39,50,703 in the pre-war year of 1939 to the budgetted amount of Rs.1,05,24,440 in 1948-49. In addition to this, we have had to spend this very year, rupees 15 lacs on the construction of markets for the new population that has come to the town, apart from spending about 25 lacs in the form of increased allowances to the members of our staff in accordance with the policy of the Government of India, and on essential services necessitated by the increased population.

The real fact is that those coming from the West Punjab consisted for the most part of city dwellers, merchants and artisans, and next to Amritsar, Delhi was the only big city on their way, and being the capital of India, it was but natural that there should be a large influx of people here. But to settle and rehabilitate them all we need both accommodation and money. Although with the kind help of our Prime Minister we have suceeded in building 1500 shops in the Lajpat Rai Municipal Market, yet this would not by itself be able to solve the problem. We badly need two or three markets more of this type to relieve the congestion to any appreciable degree.

But the construction of any additional Markets on the few remaining open sites will be greatly detrimental to the health and sanitation of the city. As a matter of fact it was for the Delhi Improvement Trust to come forward to render real assistance to the distressed refugees and give up, at least for the time being, their old policy of buying cheap land and selling it in the form of plots at remunerative rates.

The holocaust of the Punjab had its inevitable repercussions in Delhi also and this fair city too witnessed for sometime disgraceful scenes of loot, murder and lawlessness which make us hang our heads in shame and make us feel bitterly pained at all that happened here those days. Luckily, however, Mahatma Gandhi's enchanting presence and the powerful voice he raised againt this religious fanaticism soon brought Delhi to a sensible frame of mind. And although the blot of the inhuman and ghastly assassination of Mahatma Ji shall for ever remain on our fore-heads, we can truthfully say this much that sincere and honest attempts are being made, alike by the old and the new population of Delhi, to fulfil the pledges our leaders took at the feet of the Mahatma during the course of his fast for the establishment of peace in the city.

We must confess, however, that some misguided people are still taking undue advantage of the laxity and inefficiency that had crept into the local Administration at that time, and apart from the fact that in the bazars and the streets of Delhi the Municipal bye-laws are being flouted openly, the general disregard for law and order and disrespect for authority have increased to such an appalling extent that thefts and other crimes are daily multiplying, the sale and consumption of liquor has increased enormously, minor girls are being frequently kidnapped, black market and bribery are rampant every where and the news of the illegal occupation of houses and plots and such other undesirable occurrences have become almost a daily routine. In this connection, we think it proper to submit that the time has now come when the local administrative control should be tightened, and in view of the fact that the standard of administration in Delhi sets an example for the rest of the country, law and order should be strictly and impartially enforced as before. In this connection it has been our considered opinion for quite a long time that the personnel of the administration of Delhi, instead of being recruited from one province only should be drawn from all the provinces so as to have a balanced set-up, due regard being paid to the rights and claims of the citizens of Delhi. We earnestly hope that this request of ours will receive your Government's sympathetic consideration, and the defects and inefficiency, which have of late, lowered the reputation of the Administration of Delhi will be duly and effectively remedied in your regime.

Respected Raja Ji,

With your blessings, we hope, we shall be able to solve all our various problems, that we shall receive adequate financial help from the Government of India, that all invidious and irritating distinctions will disappear, that the citizens of Delhi will have their due share in the administration which will be both just and firm, and that our city will once again prosper as she did in the past.

And now, Your Excellency, before we conclude, we beg to offer you our humble and hearty felicitations, on behalf of the citizens of Delhi, on your having assumed the responsibilities of your august office, and assure you that in the building of the New India, whenever and whatever humble services we, the people of Delhi, may be called upon to render, we shall not be found wanting and shall always endeavour to discharge our duties and obligations as cheerfully as ever before.

We subscribe ourselves,
On behalf of the citizens of Delhi,
Your Excellency's Sincere Admirers,
The President and Members
of
The Delhi Municipal Committee.

Municipal Committee Press, Delhi.
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